

and add, each one, a tithe of twenty oxen
with gifts of bronze and gold to warm your heart.
Meanwhile we cannot blame you for your anger.”

280 Odysseus glowered under his black brows
and said:

“Not for the whole treasure of your fathers,
all you enjoy, lands, flocks, or any gold
put up by others, would I fold my hand.
There will be killing till the score is paid.

285 You forced yourselves upon this house. Fight your way out,
or run for it, if you think you’ll escape death.
I doubt one man of you skins by.” . . .

*Aemachus joins his father in the fight. They are helped by the
vineyard and cowherd. Now the suitors, trapped in the hall
without weapons, are struck right and left by arrows, and
many of them lie dying on the floor.*

At this moment that unmanning thundercloud,
the aegis, Athena’s shield,
took form aloft in the great hall.

And the suitors mad with fear
at her great sign stampeded like stung cattle by a river
when the dread shimmering gadfly strikes in summer,
in the flowering season, in the long-drawn days.
After them the attackers wheeled, as terrible as falcons
from eyries⁹ in the mountains veering over and diving

15 down
with talons wide unsheathed on flights of birds,
who cower down the sky in chutes and bursts along the
valley—

but the pouncing falcons grip their prey, no frantic wing
avails,

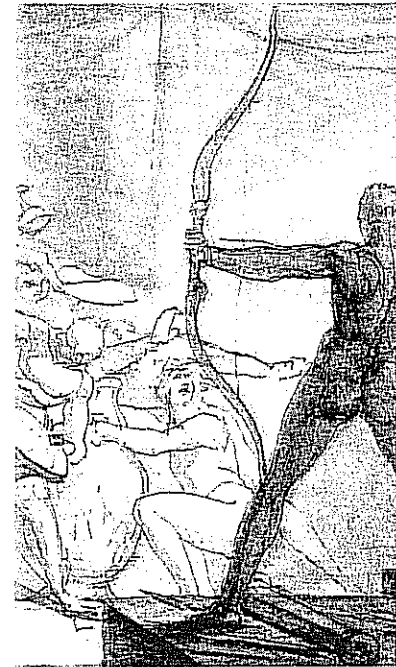
and farmers love to watch those beakèd hunters.

20 So these now fell upon the suitors in that hall,
turning, turning to strike and strike again,
while torn men moaned at death, and blood ran smoking
over the whole floor. . . .

(from Book 22)

WORDS TO OWN

glowered (glou’ard) v.: glared; stared angrily.



*Ulysses Slaying the Suitors (detail)
(1802) by Henry Fuseli.*

Kunsthau Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland.

1295. **eyries** (er’ēz): nests built in
high places.



*What does this bloody
scene add to the epic’s
theme about the value
of hospitality and about what
happens to people who mock
divine laws?*

Read
after
p. 960

Read before p. 961

ODYSSEUS AND PENELOPE

A Odysseus now calls forth the maids who have betrayed his household by associating with the suitors. He orders them to clean up the house and dispose of the dead. Telemachus then "pays" them by hanging them in the courtyard.

B Eurycleia runs to Penelope to announce the return of Odysseus and the defeat of the suitors. The faithful wife—the perfect mate for the wily Odysseus—suspects a trick from the gods and decides to test this stranger who claims to be her husband.

1305 Crossing the doorsill she sat down at once
in firelight, against the nearest wall,
across the room from the lord Odysseus.

There

leaning against a pillar, sat the man
and never lifted up his eyes, but only waited
for what his wife would say when she had seen him.

C 1310 And she, for a long time, sat deathly still
in wonderment—for sometimes as she gazed
she found him—yes, clearly—like her husband,
but sometimes blood and rags were all she saw.
Telemachus's voice came to her ears:

"Mother,

1315 cruel mother, do you feel nothing,
drawing yourself apart this way from Father?
Will you not sit with him and talk and question him?
What other woman could remain so cold?
Who shuns her lord, and he come back to her
1320 from wars and wandering, after twenty years?
Your heart is hard as flint and never changes!"

Penelope answered:

"I am stunned, child.

I cannot speak to him. I cannot question him.
I cannot keep my eyes upon his face.

1325 If really he is Odysseus, truly home,
beyond all doubt we two shall know each other
better than you or anyone. There are
secret signs we know, we two."

A smile

1330 came now to the lips of the patient hero, Odysseus,
who turned to Telemachus and said:

"Peace: let your mother test me at her leisure.
Before long she will see and know me best.
These tatters, dirt—all that I'm caked with now—
make her look hard at me and doubt me still. . . ."



Make notes on
as you read the
What must she
thinking?